



Wisconsin DPI
Family, School, and Community Partnerships
AmeriCorps*VISTA Project



Have you ever wished you had the time or the resources to launch an after-school program?

Have you ever wanted to get community volunteers involved in your school?

Have you ever wanted to have more tutoring opportunities available for students?

Have you ever wanted more parent and community engagement in your school?

An Opportunity for Low-Income Schools to Participate in the VISTA Project of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

If your answer is yes to any of these questions, then an AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) may be a perfect match for your school. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has slots available for VISTAs to work for one *calendar* year (with the possibility of renewal for an additional two years) in schools serving high concentrations of low-income children to help close the achievement gap and promote family, school, and community partnerships. The Corporation for National and Community Service provides funding for the VISTAs. The goal of the DPI project is to close the achievement gap and help all students succeed by building solid family, school, and community partnerships. All schools and educational programs serving a low-income population will be considered.

What is AmeriCorps*VISTA?

VISTA, often referred to as the “domestic Peace Corps,” engages thousands of Americans in intensive, results-driven service each year. VISTA is a program under the umbrella of AmeriCorps, a national service initiative. VISTA members of all ages and backgrounds have been serving economically challenged communities for 40 years, helping people help themselves to improve the conditions of their own lives. Members of AmeriCorps*VISTA serve full-time and live in the communities they serve, creating programs that can continue after they complete their service.

With support, the VISTA assigned to your site can expect to do the following:

- build school-community collaboration around the goal of closing the achievement gap
- support parents in their role as their children’s first teacher
- recruit and train parents and other community members to help in classrooms and after-school programs
- enhance resources in and use of the school’s family center
- connect other partnership and learning efforts in your school and community, including Title 1, public librarians, volunteer coordinators, youth service-learning participants, religious and service organizations, arts and cultural groups, and businesses
- monitor and report progress of efforts
- participate in training sponsored by the CNS and the DPI
- work to build capacity and sustain the project

Please note the work of the VISTAs is to lay the groundwork for change to be sustained. Therefore, VISTAs are not to replace paid staff or to perform direct service. For example, your VISTA should not be expected to work as a classroom aide or tutor, or perform lunch or recess duties.

Is my school eligible to have a VISTA?

The VISTA project is a special opportunity for schools serving a high percentage of low-income students. Having a DPI VISTA can help your school realize your commitment to increase school-community collaboration and student academic achievement.

What is required of my school or school district in order to host a VISTA?

Schools or districts hosting DPI VISTAs are required to do the following:

- provide supervision, support, and mentoring—there must be a staff person committed to the role of VISTA Supervisor who will work with the VISTA to complete paperwork and report on progress
- accept the VISTA as a staff member—make sure current staff understand the goals of the VISTA project and buy in to the VISTA's initiatives
- provide an office space, including a phone, computer, and Internet access, as well as an e-mail account
- provide adequate materials and supplies to do the job
- provide adequate training and orientation to do the job
- ensure that the VISTA and VISTA Site Supervisor participate in the DPI orientation, other VISTA trainings and e-mail correspondence
- assure that the VISTA will not engage in direct service or perform the duties of paid staff members
- participate as a member of the Wisconsin and National Partnership Schools Network (a resource for family, school, and community partnerships)
- work to sustain the project

How will the DPI provide assistance?

DPI provides technical assistance to schools hosting VISTAs. VISTA Leaders at the DPI maintain regular contact with all VISTA sites and provide support. The DPI communicates frequently via e-mail and holds periodic trainings in which VISTAs and their site supervisors are required to participate.

How does my school recruit a VISTA?

VISTAs may be from the local community or another state; they may be recent college graduates, homemakers, retired senior citizens, or they just may be exploring a career change. Whatever their background, candidates must be well-qualified as VISTA is not a job training program. They must be willing to commit 40 hours a week for one *full* calendar year to work in low-income communities. VISTAs may not hold another job or attend school during their service. Participating schools will be expected to recruit locally for VISTAs; however, the DPI will help with the process as needed.

What does the VISTA receive for his/her service?

VISTAs receive the following benefits for their service commitment:

- \$785 (rural) or \$816 (urban) monthly stipend paid by the Corporation for National Service
- \$4,725 educational award to offset student loans or be applied to future educational opportunities
 - OR -
 - \$1,200 end-of-service cash stipend
- health benefits
- personal and sick leave
- student loan deferment (if applicable)
- o candidates must be well-qualified ongoing support and training with other VISTA members
- a Relocation Allowance (if applicable)
- a Child Care Allowance of up to \$300 per month (VISTA must be income-eligible, with age-eligible children)

Sign Me Up!

Schools interested in having a VISTA should submit a completed Host Site Application (enclosed) to Jane Grinde, Director of Bright Beginnings at the DPI as soon as possible. *VISTA slots will be made available on a first-come, first-serve basis to eligible schools*, and the priority deadline for application for the 2005/2006 school year is **April 15**. For more information, e-mail Jane at jane.grinde@dpi.state.wi.us or call her at (608) 266-9356.